

“Delaware and the Underground Railroad Through Poetry” at Dover, Del.’s Old State House

Listing of museum events for April and May also included

On Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 1 p.m., The Old State House, located at 25 The Green in Dover, Del., will present a program of poetry written about the Underground Railroad and slavery in the United States. The program will feature Seaford, Del. poet Thurman W. Adams reading his own works, as well as Old State House staff-members reading poems by John W. Franklin, Robert Hayden, Harriet Beecher Stowe and others. The program will also include African-American spirituals and other works performed by the First Baptist Church of Cheswold Inspirational Choir. In addition to the Underground Railroad poetry program, The Old State House will be open for visitation and tours from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



“Delaware and the Underground Railroad Through Poetry” is presented in conjunction with “First Saturday in the First State,” a monthly series of events sponsored by the First State Heritage Park. Admission is free and open to the public. For additional information, call 302-744-5055.

The Underground Railroad was a pre-Civil War network of secret routes and safe houses used by black slaves in the United

States to escape to free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists and allies who were sympathetic to their cause. The First State's role in this illicit enterprise is explored in the exhibit "[An Illegal Activity: The Underground Railroad in Delaware](#)" that is currently on display at the [First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries](#) located a few blocks away from The Old State House at 121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Poet, historian and retired farmer Thurman W. Adams (born 1948) is a former member of the board of trustees of the Delaware Technical and Community College, founder and first president of the Bridgeville Historical Society and former vice-president and board member of The William H. Ross Mansion and Plantation of the Seaford Historical Society.



Adams traces his American ancestry to Jamestown Va., the first permanent English settlement in North America. He is the 7th great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin; 5th great-grandson of William Ross, a member of the Delaware Committee of Safety during the American Revolutionary War; and nephew of the late Delaware Senate President Pro Tem Thurman Adams, Jr., the longest serving member in the history of the Delaware Senate. Members of the Ross side of Adams' family that were living in Dorchester County, Md. were the owners of Araminta Harriet Ross whose married name was Harriet Tubman. After her escape from slavery in 1849, Tubman became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading more than 300 slaves to freedom on more than 20 separate trips through Maryland and Delaware.

Adams' poems often focus on themes from American history including the following:

The Underground Railroad

Dedicated to the memory of Harriet Ross Tubman

A railroad without rails,
Passengers, but not in cars,
A one-way route South to North,
Guided at night by the stars.

A trip by this transportation,
Was paid, but not a ticket was bought,
For it cost many their blood and lives,
In reaching its end, not to be caught.

No dining car for food and drink,
No sleeping car for a bed,
No cushioned seats to sit and rest,
By a conductor, North you were led.

For on the Underground Railroad,
Travel was like none other around,
You were traveling northward bound,
And your final destination was freedom found.

Completed in 1791, [The Old State House](#) is one of the oldest state-house buildings in the United States, serving as the home of Delaware's legislature until 1933 when the General Assembly moved to larger quarters in Legislative Hall. The venerable structure now appears as it would have in the late 1700s during the United States' critical early years as a nation. It features a courtroom, governor's and county offices and chambers for the state's Senate and House of Representatives. The building is situated on Dover's historic Green, a public area designated by William Penn in 1683 which is now a component of the [First State National Monument](#).



Following is a schedule of events that are taking place at the state of Delaware's three downtown Dover museums—the First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries, the Johnson Victrola Museum and The Old State House—during April and May 2014. Admission is free for all events listed. For additional information, call 302-744-5055.

Thru July 31, 2014

"An Illegal Activity: The Underground Railroad in Delaware."

Exhibit explores the First State's role in the Underground Railroad by showcasing Thomas Garrett and Samuel D. Burris and the actions they took in following their consciences rather than the law. Presented in partnership with the Underground Railroad Coalition of Delaware. [First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries](#), Delaware Public Archives building, 121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dover. Mon.–Fri., 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Sat., 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Sun., 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 3, 2014

"A Spy and a Hero: Delaware's Allen McLane." Lecture by historic-site interpreter Tom Welch on Allen McLane of Smyrna, Del., a hero of the American Revolution, speaker of the state House of Representatives and delegate at Delaware's Constitution Ratification Convention. Part of the History Coffee-Hour Lecture Series. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 5, 2014

"Delaware and the Underground Railroad Through Poetry."

Program examines poetry written about the Underground Railroad by both popular and little-known poets including Thurman W. Adams of Seaford, Del. [First Saturday in the First State](#) program. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. Program at 1 p.m. Museum open 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 5 and Friday, April 18, 2014

"1904 Fire at the Camden Plant." Guided tours focus on the

fire that devastated the Victor Talking Machine Company's Camden, N.J. plant in 1904, and the changes in safety and manufacturing that resulted from the tragedy. Tours will also feature a special blend of vintage recordings played on authentic Victor Talking Machines. [First Saturday in the First State](#) program. [Johnson Victrola Museum](#), 375 S. New St., Dover. 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 5; Friday, April 18; and Saturday, May 3, 2014

"An Illegal Activity." Utilizing the exhibit "[An Illegal Activity: The Underground Railroad in Delaware](#)" as a backdrop, guided tours will explore Delaware's crucial role in the Underground Railroad and on two Delaware leaders who aided in this "freedom enterprise." [First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries](#), Delaware Public Archives building, 121 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dover. Tours at 10 a.m., Noon and 2 p.m. (On May 3, 10 a.m. and Noon only). Museum open 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. on April 5; 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. on April 18; and 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. on May 3.

Thursday, April 10, 2014

"Last Call: The Early Temperance Movement in Delaware." Lecture by Nancy Gardner on the movement which sought to reduce or prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Part of the History Coffee-Hour Lecture Series. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 17, 2014

"Murder and Mayhem: The Borders of Delaware." Lecture by Brian Cannon, lead historic-site interpreter at the New Castle Court House Museum, on Delaware's unique arched boundary and the factors that created a lawless environment near the state's ambiguous borders with Pennsylvania and Maryland. Part of the History Coffee-Hour Lecture Series. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. 5:30 p.m.

Friday, April 18, 2014

"Freedom Tours." Special guided tours focus on the unique stories of freedom and equality that impacted Delaware citizens. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

May 1, 2014–Ongoing

"Simple Pleasures: Picnic, Play and Dance." Display of original Edwardian and roaring 20s fashions that reflect the spirit of the liberated "modern" woman as depicted in the Downton Abbey television series. From the collections of the state of Delaware. [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. May 2, 9 a.m.–9 p.m. May 3, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m., May 4, 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Other times, Mon.–Sat., 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Sun., 1:30–4:30 p.m.

Friday, May 2, 2014

"A Taste of Jazz: From the Beginning." Guided tours explore the sounds of the Jazz Age and the role played by Delaware's native son, E.R. Johnson in jazz-music history, accompanied by early-jazz recordings played on authentic Victor Talking Machines. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [Johnson Victrola Museum](#), 375 S. New St., Dover. 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Friday, May 2, 2014

"Madam C.J. Walker, Millionairess." Dr. Daisy Century of the American Historical Theatre portrays the 19th century entrepreneur, philanthropist and founder of the Walker Company which specialized in hair-care products for African-Americans. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. Programs at 6 and 8 p.m. Museum open 9 a.m.–9 p.m.

Saturday, May 3, 2014

"The War of the Roses: Delaware's Suffragist Movement." Guided tours explore Delaware's role in the movement that resulted in women gaining the right to vote, and how the movement affected people's daily lives and influenced

women's attire. Tours will also examine the famous speech on suffrage by Gov. John G. Townsend Jr. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 3, 2014

"Nipper and Other Famous Dogs." Learn about the inquisitive little dog who adorns the Victor trademark, "His Masters Voice," and hear how this popular pooch paved the way for other famous canines of the 20th century. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [Johnson Victrola Museum](#), 375 S. New St., Dover. 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 3, 2014

"Dry as a Martini: Prohibition in Delaware, Neither Shaken nor Stirred." Interactive performance/presentation—complete with historical interpreters in 1920s-style dress—exploring the state's ratification of the 18th amendment, its attempts to enforce the law, and its ratification of the 21st amendment repealing Prohibition. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. Programs at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Museum open 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 3, 2014

"No Ordinary Speakeasy: The Johnson Club." Musical presentation by DonDel productions in which the museum will be transformed into a speakeasy (minus the alcohol) featuring 1920s smooth blues. Guests are invited to come in "twenties" dress. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [Johnson Victrola Museum](#), 375 S. New St., Dover. Performances at 1 and 3 p.m. Museum open 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Free admission.

Sunday, May 4, 2014

"Alice Roosevelt's Maid." Kim Hanley of the American Historical Theatre portrays Peggy, maid of Theodore Roosevelt's daughter Alice. Program provides audiences with

an up-close look at the clothing and personal items of wealthy women during the Gilded Age. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. Programs at 1 and 3 p.m. Museum open 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 4, 2014

“Simple Pleasures: Picnic, Play and Dance.” Ann Baker Horsey, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs’ curator of collections, will discuss spring and summer recreational activities and their original Edwardian and Roaring ‘20s fashions. Part of the [81st Annual Dover Days Festival](#). [The Old State House](#), 25 The Green, Dover. Program at 2 p.m. Museum open 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

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Contact:

Jim Yurasek

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Phone: 302-736-7413

E-mail: Jim.Yurasek@delaware.gov

Web: <http://history.delaware.gov>